



WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE

Embrace Menopause

Finding Balance Exercise: Sensation Tracking

Give yourself 10-15 minutes of uninterrupted space for this exercise. Provided below is a general step by step guide aimed to tune into your physical body and explore the concept of balance from a somatic perspective. Feel free to explore sensation, and the idea of balance however feels best to you.

1. Find a quiet spot where you can sit or lie down comfortably. Communicate with your household as needed, silence your notifications.
2. Begin by noticing the weight of your body on whatever you are sitting on. Notice what parts of your body are supported.
3. Notice your breathing. You do not need to change or extend your breathing, just begin to notice your natural rhythm and breath.
4. Begin to track sensation, starting with the top of your head and move down. You can begin to focus on the left side of your body and move over to the right. Be curious about whatever sensation is present.
 - ★ Top of head, back of head
 - ★ Face: forehead, space between brows, eyes, cheeks, jaw, mouth, inside of mouth
 - ★ Throat, back of neck
 - ★ Shoulders, Arms, elbows, wrists, hands, fingers
 - ★ Chest: Can you tune into your heart beat?
 - ★ Upper back, spine, lower back: How are you holding your body right now?
 - ★ Sides of the body, Trunk of the body
 - ★ Hips, pelvis, tail bone and glutes
 - ★ Legs, knees, ankles, feet, toes
 - ★ Be curious about whatever sensation is present.
 - ★ Shift your focus from left to right, right to left, noticing what is coming up.
 - ★ Feel your weight fully supported.
 - ★ In this quiet space, you can consider what you really need in the moment, right now and today? What feels important? What needs to be communicated? How can you support yourself in finding balance?
 - ★ Take in some deep breaths and let it all go.
 - ★ As you come back into full awareness, take your time to adjust.
 - Gently open your eyes and notice color, texture, and objects in the room around you.
 - Notice sound, notice the temperature of the air.
 - Feel your body supported by whatever you are sitting on.
 - Wiggle your fingers and toes, begin to stretch and allow your body to move.
5. This is a great time to journal and spend some quiet time in reflection. Offer yourself patience and compassion. How can you support yourself today?

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Exploratory Journaling Prompts

Utilize these prompts to get in tune with your relationship with your own sense of balance. As you move through each prompt, allow yourself to spend time with each question. This exploration is just for you, you may be surprised at what comes forward or it may not be new information. This is not an activity to prompt major changes in your life, but rather reflect and offer curiosity and engagement in your own unique experience!

1. How do you relate to the concept of emotional balance? What does being balanced mean to you?
2. What parts of you feel balanced and what parts of you feel out of balance? What areas of your life feel in balance/out of balance?
3. How is your own emotional state? Are there judgements around how you feel? Too emotional, too angry, too sad? What do these emotions say about you as a person/partner/friend/parent/family member/employee/employer?
 - a. If you are holding judgements around your emotional state or reactions, where do you think these judgements come from? How should you be feeling or behaving? Why?
4. What would be different in your life if you felt truly in balance?
5. What do you think is stopping you from achieving that balance? Do these blocks to your feeling balanced feel within your control to change or are they beyond your control to change?
6. If there are blocks to feeling in balance that are beyond your control, what can you do to support yourself in letting go? What parts *can* you control?
7. If there are blocks to feeling in balance that are within your control to shift, what action feels good to take? What is motivating you to take action? What is preventing you from taking action?
8. How does it feel to offer compassion to yourself, no matter your emotional state? How can you offer compassion to yourself for however you feel?
 - a. If you are feeling stuck here, ask yourself: How would you offer compassion to a friend experiencing the same emotion?

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Hormonal Balancing Act with Symptom Identification

Our bodies are constantly maintaining homeostasis throughout our lives. During the menopausal transition, this is not different, and through discomfort we feel the fluctuations within our endocrine systems. Below are some identifiers of what emotional and physical symptoms you may be experiencing based on which hormones are high and which are low. This is not the rule, everyone is different and on their own journey. To be balanced is going to take exploration of the individual body and time to understand how to support those imbalances.

This is not an exhaustive list of the hormones that are changing within our bodies but rather a small group that most will have an account of imbalance during their menopausal shift.

- ★ High Estrogen or Estrogen Dominance
 - One might experience this more at the beginning of perimenopause and into the menopausal year.
 - Symptoms include: bloating, breast tenderness, fibroids/cysts or excess cramping, heavy periods, brain-fog, heart palpitations and depression.
- ★ Low Estrogen
 - We are most likely to experience this throughout the menopausal transition, including postmenopause.
 - Symptoms include: dry skin, vaginal dryness, skipping periods, night sweats and mood swings.
- ★ High Progesterone
 - Unchecked progesterone is likely to be high if we supplement with progesterone or progesterone supportive herbs and occurs more toward the end of perimenopause.
 - Symptoms include: waking up foggy or tired, dizzy/spinning spells, water retention, long menstrual cycles and severe anxiety or panic attacks.

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A body under numerous stressors is more likely to lead to emotional ups and downs. Thankfully, we can support ourselves with diet, supplementation, movement, self-love, and acceptance. Below, please find some helpful ways of nurturing the body during stressful hormonal shifts.

★ Estrogen Imbalance

- Since our body is always trying to help us balance, we can look at the whole and not just one part at a time. Estrogen can be balanced with a diet full of phytoestrogen rich foods.
 - Phytoestrogen rich foods act like adaptogens to our endocrine system, working with the system to restore balance rather than limiting or stimulating estrogen production.
 - Phytoestrogens also help reduce free radicals within the body. Free radical cells can cause premature aging and suspend healthy tissue production.
 - Isoflavones, a type of phytoestrogen, can help the body lower cholesterol, support heart health and build strong bones. All reducing stress the body might be experiencing.
 - Isoflavones and other phytoestrogens are binding to estrogen receptors all over the body and mimic a low amount of estrogen. If the body has low estrogen, it will take the estrogen mimic in and continue absorbing other estrogens produced by the body. If the body is experiencing estrogen dominance, the mimic estrogen will stay on the receptor allowing the stronger estrogen produced by the body to be absorbed into our liver and excreted as waste allowing for balance.
 - Phytoestrogen and isoflavone rich foods are best organic and non-gmo and include whole or fermented soy, chickpeas, black or green tea, assorted berries, cherries, citrus' pith, apples, carrots, oats, olives, pumpkin seeds, flax seed, and sunflower seeds.
- One herb that is a helpful adaptogen for estrogen is Dong Quai.
 - Always talk with your doctor or licensed practitioner before starting any herbal regimen.
 - While Dong Quai can help balance the endocrine system it might not be the best fit for you so start slow.
- In my experience, to achieve balance with the use of herbs, a synergistic blend is always the best foot forward.
 - Work with a blend that has been formulated by a professional and make sure it is okay to take while on any existing medications.
 - Most health food stores and apothecaries can point you to a good option. I personally enjoy the formulations created by the women at *Wishgarden Herbs*.
- Estrogen dominant individuals can receive several benefits from the consumption of cruciferous vegetables.
 - Cruciferous vegetables will help the liver eliminate unneeded estrogen more effectively.
 - These vegetables include broccoli, brussels sprouts, kale, cabbage, Romanesco, collard greens, horseradish, radish, and turnips.

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- It is also important to move regularly and breathe.
 - Low impact movement is less stressful on the body but if you love the movement you are participating in then it will be helpful to your balancing estrogen levels and overall stress.
- ★ Progesterone Imbalance
 - There are a few things to help the progesterone levels in the body. Most abundantly is to support the liver and its ability to both support the production of hormones and the detoxification of hormones.
 - Reducing caffeine, abundant sugar, highly processed foods, and hydrogenated oils will go a long way with your liver's health.
 - You can also eat more fiber like whole vegetables, fruits and grains and eat plenty of b-vitamin and d-vitamin rich foods. These are usually foods that are yellow and orange.
 - Several herbs are supportive for progesterone balance, but I would focus on nervine or stress relief herbs like passionflower, lemon balm, valerian, chamomile or skullcap.
 - Again, movement is very important for balance especially when we are stressed and might be moody, irritable, or anxious.
 - Focus on movement that is abundantly stress free like walking, light swimming, gardening, or stretching while deep breathing.

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FIND BALANCE AND HEAL DURING THE MENOPAUSE TRANSITION

GENETIC PREDISPOSITIONS

This refers to health conditions that are common in your family, which can put you more at risk for the same conditions. This information can be used to your advantage. For example, if you know your family has a strong history of cancer, you may decide to avoid a high acidic diet and participate in regular cardio to help reduce your risk.

Examples:

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

This refers to what you are exposed to in your environment that may either contribute to health or create a health barrier. For example, living in areas with excessive heat can create extra stress on the body. Deciding to wear breathable clothing and staying hydrated can lessen this stress.

Examples:

LIFESTYLE FACTORS

This refers to how you live your life – for example, the foods you eat or the consistency and how you exercise. Especially during the menopausal transition, we can listen to our needs to help us adapt to our changing body.

Examples:

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Often, we know the steps we should take to support our health to find balance before, during and after perimenopause. We generally have the answers already.

In the space below, consider the genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors that may affect your health during this powerful transition.

List all that apply under Personal Exposure. Then consider what you could do to support balance and lessen the effects of your exposure.

Factors	Personal Exposure	What can I do about this?
Genetic		
Environmental		
Lifestyle		

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